

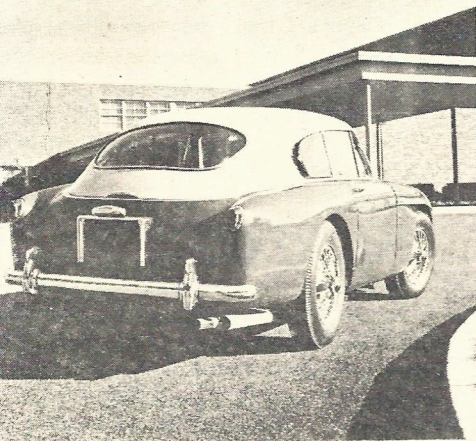
*Careful modifications to the roof line and rear quarter window, plus some sculpturing of the front hood above the DB3S-like grille have given a sleek, handsome appearance to a sporting coupe of rare utility.*

**SCI ROAD TEST:**

**ASTON MARTIN DB2/4**



*Thin chrome strip highlights paint separation, doesn't mar attractively sculptured tail.*



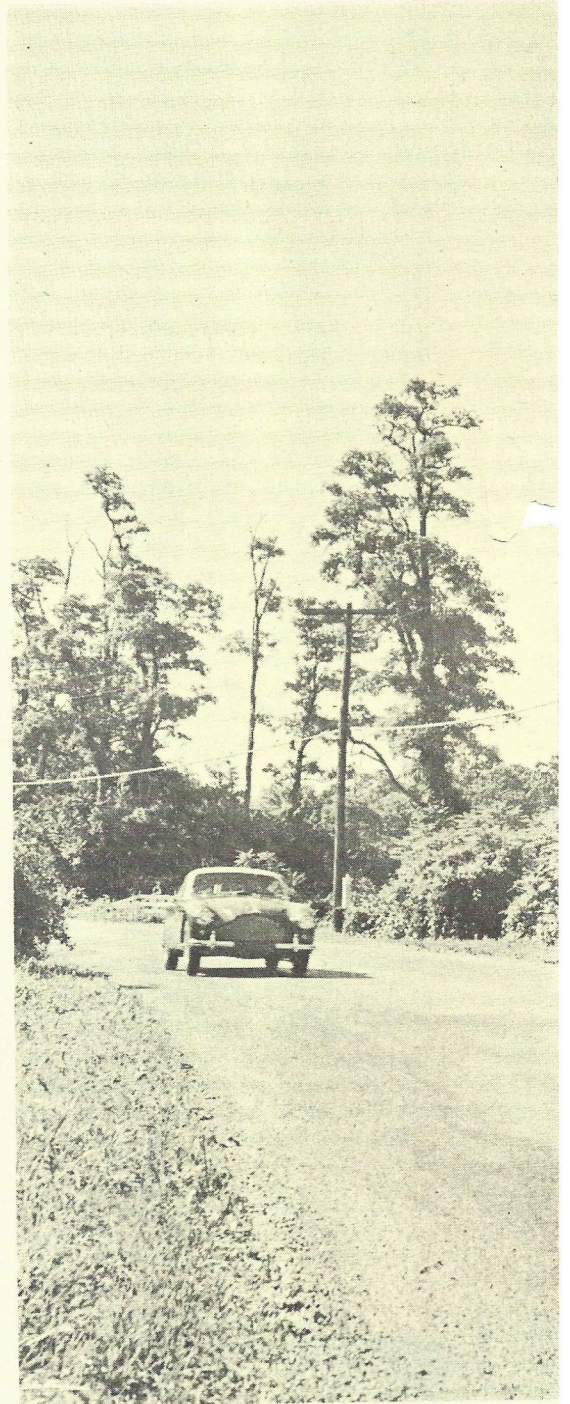
**T**HE newest development of von Eberhorst's post-war design for Aston Martin, the DB 2/4 MK III, is a man's car through and through. A Gran Turismo car in spirit as well as by the regs, it offers a truly sporting drive with *pur sang* handling characteristics better than most of the popular sports cars; yet at the same time it retains tremendous utility, although at the rather considerable price of \$6950.

Frankly, we hadn't looked forward to testing this Aston Martin, since the earlier DB 2/4 was a rather heavy, unresponsive thing. But the MK III was a pleasant surprise with improvements in power, in shape, and perhaps most important, though rather subtle, in the relationship of pedal and control forces which indirectly led to an improvement in handling. Previously the clutch required disconcertingly little pressure to disengage, while the gear lever, though precise in location, needed a rather heavy effort to move it. Now the clutch pressure is increased and the gear shift is more gentle, resulting in a very happy balance of the forces required.

The "2/4" stems from an old English way of designating an automobile's seating capacity, comfortably-full and jam-packed-full; but in neither case do the manufacturers resort to legless children of pygmy parentage as a criterion of passenger size. The DB 2/4 is, therefore, a two seater coupe with the option (by flicking two pairs of latches) of a good sized trunk and a smallish back seat (reminiscent of the old club-coupe of the 40's), or else a station wagon-like cargo deck accessible both from within the car and through an ingenious rear "trunk lid". The latter includes the rear window, enabling the lid to be of ample size. The Feltham, Middlesex boys not only looked at Detroit's station wagons, they went them one better.

Access to the engine is also on the grand scale, as the entire front body panel pivots up and forward about an axis just behind the for-decoration-only bumpers. Vulnerable to parking damage, perhaps, but what a crowd-gatherer it turned out to be on an otherwise quiet mid-Manhattan street. The attractively turned out twin-cam engine nestles within the truss-frame built up of square section tubing, open on both sides when the nose is lifted.

American racing fans will be fascinated by the engine, as it has barrel crank case construction similar to that of the Offies. All main bearings except the front one are carried in machined, circular webs, which after being fitted to the crankshaft, are installed with it from the rear into the extremely rigid crankcase. Unlike the Offy, the case is in unit with the cylinder block. The wet sleeves are retained by flanges and the pressure of the separate cylinder head. The valves are inclined at an angle of 30°, giving the gasses a clear path in and out. Carburetion was by twin S.U.s of 1 3/4 inch throat diameter on the test car, but options for the engine include three twin-choke Webers as well as 8.6/1 pistons and an oil radiator. In that state it is essentially identical to the engine used in the DB3S, the factory's team cars until this year. Exhaust is through two separate



*Aston Martin understeers firmly, and resists roll to a remarkable degree.*

manifolds, split 1-2-3 and 4-5-6, each with its own tail-pipe and muffler, although a single-exhaust system is available.

The exhaust note is rather in keeping with the character of the car: firm and authoritative, but not blatant. In contrast, the English-made Firestone Super Sports tires fairly sang on smooth asphalt.

All runs were made using a maximum of 5500 revs, in consideration of the admonition of J.S. Inskip's David Ash, that "if we broke it, we'd bought it". Acceleration is nearly on a par with the hottest Detroit-ware that SCI has tested, but the 4.11 /11 rear-end ratios available would permit improvements. For those owners who want gasoline economy after spending \$6950 for an automobile, a 3.27 ratio is offered, but the real bears will probably jump for the 4.11 gears.

The four-speed transmission is a model of precision in operation, as indeed it should be, since gearboxes are the stock in trade of the David Brown industrial group. The baulk ring synchromesh works satisfactorily, although it can be overridden, but is, sadly, missing on low gear. Although it is possible to trickle through traffic in second cog as slowly as ten mph, 16 mph (corresponding to 1500 rpm) is about the lowest speed advisable, so the double clutching routine is well worth learning.

The central shift lever is excellently placed and the closely-spaced shift pattern is in tune with the close ratios offered. For keener types, even closer ratios are offered on second and third (1.26 and 1.87).

The rear suspension, a live rear axle supported by coil springs and located by parallel trailing arms and a Panhard rod, is an excellent execution of a not-very-new-layout. The result is that the rear does not steer the front around corners; but on the other hand, atrocious surfaces are not quite its cup of tea. The front suspension, similar geometrically to that of the VW but with aluminum brackets, is also quite firm. The Marles worm and roller steering gives a very considerable road feel to the driver, enabling him to place the car with a great deal of precision, albeit at the cost of noticeable effort. In a phrase, the Aston under-steers and the driver is well aware of it. The ride, though firm, is very com-

fortable which can be credited to both the low degree of pitching and the excellent leather seats.

The large, 17-inch, steering wheel sits squarely in front of the driver on a column adjustable for length. When fully extended toward the driver, visibility over the hood is under the rim, so to speak. Annoying, too, are the thick windshield pillars. The comfortably firm bucket seats are individually adjustable fore and aft and also for rake. The latter is changed by turning two cams, one at each rear corner of the seat. Unlike the German reclining seats, the Aston's do not lay down flat, but the four positions available are quite close together and all are useable when driving. Ease of entrance to the front seat is good despite the low roof line, while the entire sloping door sill and the bottom few inches of the forward hinged door are sensibly protected with scuff-proof mats — good for knocking dust off your shoes. The brake handle, when pulled on, tends to become involved with one's left footwear and it is easier to twist the key to start the engine before closing the door than after. Another petty annoyance is that the vent window can be opened to a point where it touches the steering wheel. The leather covered seats provide excellent lateral support, but a bracket or "dead pedal" could well be mounted on the nearby frame member to support the left foot while careering around clover leaves and other snaky sections.

The brake pedal is firm, as it should be, but some fancy footwork is still necessary to avoid fouling one's toes on the steering column. Although Girling disc brakes are optional on the front, there would seem to be no need for them. The Wellworthy Alfin drums, fitted as standard, dissipate heat so rapidly that our brake-fade test procedure caused no change in stopping ability, with but a slight increase in pedal travel. Most impressive.

Headroom is honorably compromised with the low roof, the latter being a sheet of aluminum painted on one side and upholstered on the other.

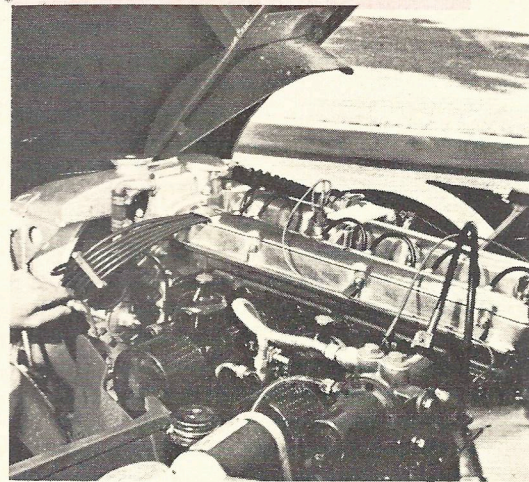
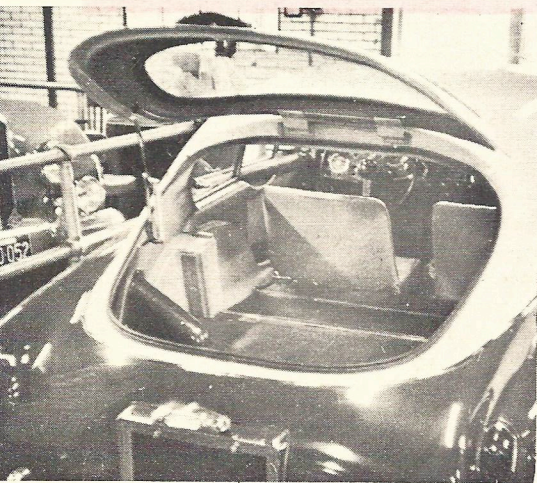
Hand operated controls include a turn signal (not self-cancelling) on the left of the steering column and a dip switch on the right. A push button on the end of the



*Nearly on limit, front suspension is still able to cope with surface irregularities despite large roll angle.*

*With trunk lid up and jump seats folded flat, improbably large objects can be installed, carried in the rear.*

*Engine accessibility rates high. Distributor has vernier adjustment but vacuum control is not used.*



**ASTON MARTIN**

**PERFORMANCE**

**TOP SPEED:**

Two-way average ..... 121.5  
 Fastest one-way run ..... 123

**ACCELERATION:**

From zero to  
 30 mph ..... 3.3  
 40 mph ..... 4.9  
 50 mph ..... 7.3  
 60 mph ..... 9.4  
 70 mph ..... 13.3  
 80 mph ..... 16.6  
 90 mph ..... 20.3  
 100 mph ..... 27.1  
 110 mph ..... 36.1  
 Standing ¼ mile ..... 17.7  
 Speed at end of quarter ..... 83 mph

**SPEED RANGES IN GEARS:**

Corresponding to 1500-5500 rpm.  
 I ..... zero to 39  
 II ..... 16 to 58  
 III ..... 24 to 87  
 IV ..... 31 to top

**SPEEDOMETER CORRECTION:**

Indicated mph	Actual mph
30	29
40	39
50	48
60	57
70	66
80	76
90	86
100	96
110	105
120	115

**FUEL CONSUMPTION:**

Hard driving ..... 14.4 mpg

**BRAKING TEST:**

More than 10 consecutive stops were made from 60 mph at decelerations between 0.6 g and 0.7 g without noticeable increase in pedal pressure and with approximately one inch increase in pedal travel.

**SPECIFICATIONS**

**POWER UNIT:**

Type ..... Six in-line  
 Valve Arrangement ..... DOHC  
 Bore & Stroke ..... 3.27 x 3.54 in. (83 x 90 mm)  
 Stroke/Bore Ratio ..... 1.08/1  
 Displacement ..... 178 cu. in. (2922 cc.)  
 Compression Ratio ..... 8.2/1 (8.6/1 optional)  
 Carburetion by ..... Two S.U. 1¾" (3 dual choke Webers optional)  
 Max. Power ..... 162 bhp @ 5500 rpm (178 bhp @ 5500 with options)  
 Idle Speed ..... 550 rpm

**DRIVE TRAIN:**

Transmission ratios I ..... 2.92  
 II ..... 1.98 (1.87 optional)  
 III ..... 1.33 (1.26 optional)  
 IV ..... 1.00  
 Final drive ratio (test car) ..... 3.77/1  
 Other available final drive ratios ..... 3.27/1, 3.5/1, 4.11/1  
 Axle torque taken by ..... Trailing links

**CHASSIS:**

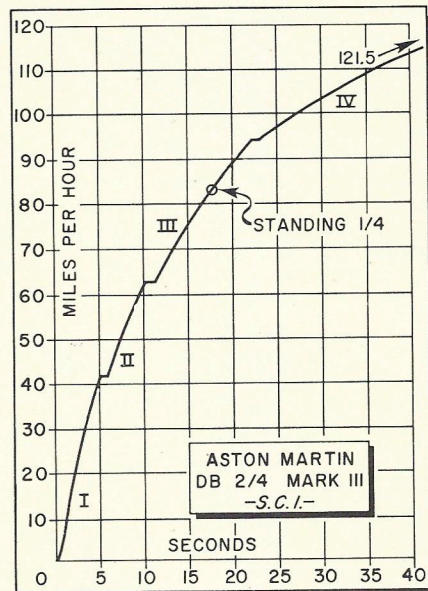
Wheelbase ..... 99 in.  
 Front Tread ..... 54 in.  
 Rear Tread ..... 54 in.  
 Suspension, front ..... Independent trailing links, coil springs, built-in anti-roll torsion bar  
 Suspension, rear ..... Live axle with parallel trailing links, panhard rod, coil springs  
 Shock absorbers ..... Armstrong double acting piston type  
 Steering type ..... Marles worm and roller  
 Steering wheel turns L to L ..... 2¾  
 Turning diameter ..... 35 ft.  
 Brake type ..... Girling hydraulic with Wellworthy Alfin drums.  
 Brake lining area ..... 168.4 sq. in.  
 Tire size ..... 6.00 x 16

**GENERAL:**

Length ..... 195½ in.  
 Width ..... 65 in.  
 Height ..... 54¼ in.  
 Weight, test car ..... 2980 lbs. (3280 as tested)  
 Weight distribution, F/R ..... 49/51  
 Weight distribution, F/R, with driver ..... 48/52  
 Fuel capacity ..... 24 U.S. gal. (3.6 reserve)

**RATING FACTORS:**

Bhp per cu. in. .... 0.91 (1.00 with options)  
 Bhp per sq. in. piston area ..... 3.23 (3.54 with options)  
 Pounds per bhp - test car ..... 18.4  
 Piston speed @ 60 mph ..... 1680 fpm  
 Piston speed @ max bhp ..... 3250 fpm  
 Brake lining area (test car) ..... 112 sq. in./ton  
 Speed in IVth gear @ 1000 rpm ..... 21.1 mph



dip switch lever enables the driver to flash his high-beam headlights at any time, without recourse to the rotary headlight switch, whether to greet another Aston Martin, to warn of one's approach to an intersection at night, or merely to frighten disgruntled peasants out of the way.

The tachometer and speedometer sit directly before the driver. (The error of the speedometer was such that before calibrating it, the 3.27 rear axle ratio was assumed to have been fitted). In addition to the clock, there are gauges for fuel, water temperature, oil pressure and amperage. The usual warning lights for high beam (blue) and turn signals (green) are there, plus a plethora of knobs, both marked and unmarked; choke, heater (we didn't try it), fog and reverse lights, plus a few whose purposes eluded us (the accompanying owner's manual was for the earlier DB 2/4). There is also a lighter and an ash tray, which swings closed to reveal the A-M winged insignia mounted on leather.

Two things about the DB 2/4 really stand out: one is the tremendous utility offered in an essentially sporting machine; the other is the superb braking system. Obviously the lessons of Mulsanne have been well learned.

The Aston Martin is truly a fine, fast car; the fact that numerous criticisms are made of small weaknesses only serves to indicate how high a standard the car sets for itself, a standard which it more than meets on the important points.